

Message Text

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PAGE 01 RANGOO 01290 01 OF 03 210120Z

67

ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-09 ISO-00 AF-08 ARA-10 NEA-10

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UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 3 RANGOON 1290

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SUBJ: CERP 0008 - UNDP: EVALUATION OF UN ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

REF: STATE 072386; (B) RANGOON 0911

PARIS FOR UNESCO; ROME FOR FODAG; VIENNA FOR IAEA AND UNIDO;
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SUMMARY: UNDP PROGRAM FOR BURMA WHICH WAS SCHEDULED FOR SIGNIFICANT INCREASE HAS BEEN HARD-HIT BY RECENT FINANCIAL RESTRAINT. UNDP OFFICIALS FEAR PROGRAM WILL LOSE MOMENTUM AS RESULT. RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE CONTINUES TO BE EFFECTIVE LEADER OF ALL UN AGENCY PROGRAMS IN BURMA. RELATIONS AND COORDINATION WITH IBRD ARE GOOD AND COORDINATION WITH ADB IMPROVED DURING PAST YEAR. UNDP STILL LACKS FORMAL COORDINATION WITH BILATERAL DONORS DUE MAINLY TO GUB DISCOURAGEMENT OF SUCH RELATIONSHIP. RELATIONS BETWEEN RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE AND GUB HAVE IMPROVED DURING PAST YEAR AND IN RECENT MONTHS GUB HAS BECOME MORE EFFICIENT IN PROCESSING EXPERT CANDIDATES AND FELLOWSHIPS. WEAKEST UNDP PROGRAM AREA IS IN INDUSTRIAL

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PAGE 02 RANGOO 01290 01 OF 03 210120Z

SECTOR WHICH SUFFERS FROM APPARENT NEGATIVE ATTITUDE BY GUB

MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY. AS A RESULT OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES BEING CLOSED DUE STUDENT DISTURBANCES, UN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IN BURMA MUST BE CONSIDERED MARGINAL AT PRESENT TIME AND PRIME TARGET FOR CUT-BACK. END SUMMARY.

A. ROLE OF UNDP IN UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

ROLE OF UNDP RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE (RESREP) FULLY ACCEPTED BY UN AGENCIES AND THE GUB. UNDP FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS AND AUSTERITY MEASURES SEEM TO HAVE ENHANCED RESREP'S POSITION VIS-A-VIS VARIOUS UN AGENCIES AS HE HAS ASSUMED FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR DECISIONS ON CUT-BACKS AND EXPENDITURE CEILINGS. AS RESULT, RESREP CLOSELY SUPERVISES AND MONITORS ROUTINE DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES WITH REGARD TO SPENDING BY AGENCIES. ONLY EXCEPTIONS ARE UNICEF WITH WHICH THERE IS CLOSE COORDINATION BUT NO DIRECT SUPERVISION AND WHO REGULAR PROGRAM AS DISTINCT FROM PROJECT PROGRAMS.

RELATIONS BETWEEN RESREP AND GUB REMAIN GOOD. THERE HAVE BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN PAST YEAR FROM THAT DESCRIBED IN REF (B). CERTAIN GUB MINISTRIES, PARTICULARLY AGRICULTURE, HAVE DEVELOPED CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS AND COORDINATION OF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS WITH UNDP; OTHERS, SUCH AS INDUSTRY, CONTINUE TO EXHIBIT AN ALOOF, IF NOT ANTAGONISTIC, ATTITUDE TOWARD RESREP AND UNDP. DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND FINANCE IS GUB LIAISON WITH UNDP. GUB OFFICIALS IN THIS OFFICE HAVE IN RECENT YEARS REACHED A MORE SOPHISTICATED APPRECIATION OF THE UN ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT AND SEEM TO HAVE A WARM PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH RESREP. CLOSE COORDINATION MAINTAINED WITH IBRD AND PROGRAMS ARE COMPLIMENTARY. ALL WORLD BANK MISSIONS WHICH VISIT BURMA CALL ON RESREP. AS NO IBRD REPRESENTATIVE STATIONED IN BURMA, UNDP PROVIDES ROUTINE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR THE VARIOUS MISSIONS. UNDP AND IBRD ALSO COOPERATING IN UMBRELLA PROJECT, PRE-INVESTMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR AGRICULTURE, POWER, TRANSPORT AND TOURISM (BUR/74/024).

RESREP IS DEFACTO REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL SPECIALIZED UN AGENCIES IN BURMA. THERE HAS BEEN NO MOVE FOR GREATER FIELD AUTONOMY FOR SPECIALIZED AGENCIES IN BURMA, PERHAPS DUE TO UN FINANCIAL RESTRAINT AND GUB LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR SUCH A MOVE. EMBASSY BELIEVES, GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES IN BURMA IN WHICH VARIOUS GUB MINISTRIES AND UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 RANGOO 01290 01 OF 03 210120Z

AGENCIES DO NOT FULLY COORDINATE DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND PROJECTS AMONG THEMSELVES, GREATER AUTONOMY FOR SPECIALIZED UN AGENCIES NOT WARRANTED. RESREP ACTS AS COORDINATOR OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN BURMA AND THIS POSITION COULD BE UNDERMINED BY SPECIALIZED AGENCIES WORKING DIRECTLY WITH CERTAIN MINISTRIES. HOWARTH

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PAGE 01 RANGOO 01290 02 OF 03 210138Z

67

ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-09 ISO-00 AF-08 ARA-10 NEA-10

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UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 3 RANGOON 1290

B. COORDINATION OF ALL EXTERNAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.

COORDINATION WITH IBRD NOTED ABOVE. ADB HAS ALSO DEVELOPED CLOSER RELATIONS WITH LOCAL UNDP OFFICE AND NEARLY EVERY ADB MISSION TO BURMA NOW CALLS ON UNDP. NO FORMAL MECHANISM EXISTS WHEREBY UNDP COORDINATES WITH BILATERAL DONORS. GUB CONTINUES TO DISCOURAGE THIS PRACTICE PREFERRING TO DEAL WITH EACH DONOR SEPARATELY. RESREP HAS ATTEMPTED TO ESTABLISH INFORMAL TIES WITH MAJOR DONORS BUT THIS HAS HAD VERY LIMITED SUCCESS.

C. FINANCIAL RESTRAINTS.

AS RESULT OF FINANCIAL RESTRAINTS UN PROJECTED 1976 EXPENDITURE FOR BURMA REDUCED FROM \$6 TO \$4.2 MILLION. MOST NEW PROJECTS FOR 1976 DEFERRED. RESREP FEELS THAT QUALITY OF ALL ACTIVITIES REDUCED AND PROGRAM LOSING MOMENTUM BY NOT STARTING NEW PROJECTS, ESPECIALLY AS 1977 IS TO BE FIRST YEAR OF NEW CYCLE. NEW COUNTRY PROGRAM WILL BE PREPARED IN MID-1977 RATHER THAN 1976. UNDP HOPES THAT BY THAT TIME FINANCIAL SITUATION WILL BE CLEARER AND PROGRAM PREPARATION CAN BE MORE MEANINGFUL.

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 RANGOO 01290 02 OF 03 210138Z

D. COUNTRY PROGRAMMING.

THERE IS TO BE MORE SECTORAL EMPHASIS IN 1977-81 PROGRAM PARTICULARLY IN HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE. PROBLEMS OF COORDINATION WITH BILATERAL DONORS CONTINUE BUT UNDP HOPEFUL THAT PROPOSED CONSULTATIVE GROUP OF DONORS UNDER IBRD AUSPICES WILL BE FORMED AS THIS COULD FACILITATE GREATER COOPERATION. UNDP FOLLOWING CONSULTATIVE GROUP PROPOSAL CLOSELY SO THAT IF SUCH BODY IS FORMED DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS CAN BE COORDINATED UNDER NEW COUNTRY PROGRAM. PRESENT PROJECTS UNDER CONSTANT REVIEW BY UNDP IN EFFORT TO ATTAIN BALANCED PROGRAM ALONG LINE OF GUB PRIORITIES. THIS HAS RESULTED IN GREATER SHIFT OF EMPHASIS TO AGRICULTURAL SECTOR.

E. PROJECT EVALUATION AND IMPLEMENTATION.

UNDP PROJECTS WELL COORDINATED WITH DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES SET FORTH BY GUB. HOWEVER, UNDP COULD TAKE STRONGER ROLE IN ASSISTING GUB TO DEFINE AND REFINER THESE PRIORITIES RATHER THAN REACTING TO THEM AFTER THEY HAVE BEEN FORMULATED. UNDP HOLDS METHODICAL TRIPARTITE REVIEW OF ALL PROGRAMS WITHOUT EXCEPTION. THIS HAS PROVEN QUITE EFFECTIVE IN MAKING PROJECTS MORE RELEVANT TO STATED DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES, AND UN OFFICIALS DESCRIBE GUB RESPONSE AS EXCELLENT.

EDUCATION WHERE UN CONTRIBUTION HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN QUITE EFFECTIVE HAS BECOME MARGINAL PROGRAM IN BURMA. THIS DUE TO GUB DECISION TO CLOSE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AS RESULT OF STUDENT DISTURBANCES. THESE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN OPEN LESS THAN THREE MONTHS DURING PAST YEAR AND ARE AGAIN CLOSED WITH NO INDICATION AS TO WHEN CLASSES MIGHT RESUME. THIS ENFORCED IDLENESS HAS NATURALLY CAUSED GREAT FRUSTRATION AMONG THOSE UN EXPERTS ASSIGNED TO TEACH IN UNIVERSITIES, AND IN VIEW FINANCIAL STRICUTRES, EDUCATION HAS BECOME PRIME TARGET FOR POSSIBLE EXPENDITURE CUTBACKS. UN EDUCATIONAL EXPERTS ARE WELL AWARE OF THIS POSSIBILITY AND UNCERTAINTY REGARDING THEIR FUTURE HAS FURTHER REDUCED MOREALE. OTHER WEAK AREAS HAVE BEEN NOTED IN INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS AS MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY SEEMS TO MAINTAIN NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD UNDP. ALL DECISIONS IN THIS FIELD ARE PAINFULLY SLOW AND FELLOWSHIPS ARE NOT BEING PROCESSED.

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PAGE 03 RANGOO 01290 02 OF 03 210138Z

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PAGE 01 RANGOO 01290 03 OF 03 210158Z

67

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UNCLAS SECTION 3 OF 3 RANGOON 1290

GUB HAS BEEN VERY PROMPT IN MEETING COUNTERPART OBLIGATIONS AND IN PROVIDING GOOD BURMESE PERSONNEL. HOWEVER, DURING 1975 ITS DECISION MAKING PROCESS, PARTICULARLY REGARDING SELECTION OF CANDIDATES FOR EXPERT POSITIONS AND NOMINATIONS FOR FELLOWSHIPS, WAS VERY SLOW. ALL TOO OFTEN BY TIME GUB DECIDED TO ACCEPT A UN EXPERT THE INDIVIDUAL WAS NO LONGER AVAILABLE AND THE ENTIRE SLOW PROCESS HAD TO BEGIN ALL OVER AGAIN REGARDING AN ALTERNATE WHO MIGHT ALSO BE UNAVAILABLE BY TIME FINAL GUB APPROVAL GIVEN. PERHAPS AS RESULT OF GUB REALIZATION THAT UN PREPARING TO CUT BACK WEAK AREAS, GUB RECORD SINCE FIRST OF THIS YEAR HAS BEEN ALMOST COMPLETE CONTRAST TO LAST YEAR. IN RECENT MONTHS DECISIONS HAVE BEEN SPEEDILY RENDERED AND PAPERS ON EXPERT CANDIDATES AND FELLOWSHIPS HAVE BEEN PROCESSED PROMPTLY. EXCEPTION HAS BEEN INDUSTRIAL SECTOR WHERE DECISION MAKING PROCESS REMAINS SLOW.

F. APPRAISAL OF PROPOSED PROJECTS.

EMBASSY MAINTAINS GOOD LIAISON WITH UNDP. AS THERE ARE NO USG BILATERAL AID PROGRAMS FOR BURMA WHICH REQUIRE COORDINATION WITH UN EFFORTS AND DUE TO SMALL FOREIGN COMMUNITY WHICH PROVIDES EMBASSY

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 RANGOO 01290 03 OF 03 210158Z

OFFICERS WITH MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET WITH UNDP OFFICIALS AND PROJECT EXPERTS, FORMAL MECHANISM FOR THIS LIAISON NOT BELIEVED NECESSARY. UNDP REGULARLY PROVIDES PROJECT DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION ON NEW PROGRAMS AND SEEKS TO GIVE THESE PROGRAMS WIDE PUBLICITY IN BURMA. CHANGES IN FORMAT FOR UNDP PROJECT DOCUMENTATION ARE TOO RECENT TO FULLY EVALUATE EFFECTS.

G. WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT.

RESREP MADE WELL AWARE OF INTEREST IN THIS EAREA BY UN COMMUNICATIONS TO FIELD. RESREP ALSO AWARE AND SOMEWHAT EMBARRASSED THAT LITTLE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN IMPLEMENTING THIS CONCEPT IN BURMA DURING PAST YEAR. TO EXTENT THAT FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS ALLOW, UNDP HOPES TO AT LEAST MAKE SMALL BEGINNING IN THIS AREA IN COMING YEAR.

PROPOSED UNFDAC PROGRAM.

PROPOSED \$6.5 MILLION UNFDAC PROGRAM FOR CROP AND INCOME SUBSTITUTION FOR POPPY CULTIVATORS, POLICE ANTI-NARCOTICS TRAINING, EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION IS OF SPECIAL INTEREST FOR U.S. NARCOTICS CONTROL EFFORTS IN BURMA. THE GUB FIRST PRESENTED PROGRAM TO UNFDAC IN 1973. UNFDAC OFFICIALS IMPRESSED WITH PLAN AND DESCRIBED IT AS COMPREHENSIVE AND REALISTIC, BUT MINOR POINTS SUCH AS WAGES FOR LOCAL EMPLOYEES DELAYED APPROVAL. THESE DIFFERENCES HAVE NOW BEEN SETTLED AND GUB HAS AGREED TO PROGRAM IN PRINCIPLE. HOWEVER, PERHAPS BECAUSE GUB UNABLE TO MEET COUNTERPART FUND REQUIREMENTS, FINAL AGREEMENT NOT YET SIGNED. EMBASSY ALSO FEELS RESREP HAS BEEN LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT PROGRAM, PERHAPS BECAUSE IT WOULD ENTAIL AN OPERATION SOMEWHAT MORE INDEPENDENT OF HIS AUTHORITY THAN MOST UN PROGRAMS IN BURMA. LOCAL UNDP OFFICIALS HOPEFUL THAT GUB WILL SIGN AGREEMENT WITHIN ONE MONTH, BUT EMBASSY HAS NO OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION OF THIS.

CONCLUSION.

ON WHOLE, UNDP PROJECTS HAVE EXPERIENCED CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS IN PAST YEAR AND UN PERSONNEL HAVE MADE PROGRESS IN OVERCOMING INHERENT BURMESE DISTRUST OF ANY FOREIGN ACTIVITY IN BURMA. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF CONTINUED LACK OF COOPERATION BY MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, EMBASSY BELIEVES INDUSTRIAL SECTOR PROGRAMS FOR BURMA UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 RANGOO 01290 03 OF 03 210158Z

COULD BE REDUCED OR ELIMINATED AND GREATER ATTENTION GIVEN TO AGRICULTURAL SECTOR. CONTINUED UNCERTAINTY REGARDING PLANS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN BURMA MAKES UN EDUCATION PROJECTS MARGINAL AT PRESENT TIME AND IF FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS REQUIRE FURTHER CUT-

BACKS, THIS WOULD APPEAR TO BE PRIME AREA FOR SUCH REDUCTION.
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